

CONTENTS OF LETTERS

MAJOR IDEA	NUMBER OF LETTERS IN WHICH MENTIONED
Drainage:	
14. is the major cause of wetlands loss	248
15. (The Drainage Act) sometimes forces landowners to drain their own land unwillingly	22
16. is usually unnecessary	23
17. should not be funded by provincial grants	121
18. must be stopped until suitable protection policies are in place	20
19. should be cost effective	35
20. is opposed by farmers who prefer wetlands	55
21. should not be subsidized by taxpayers	29
22. is harmless until proven otherwise	1
23. should continue, as agriculture is of primary importance	1
24. should not be banned	3
25. must be exempt from environmental assessment	1
26. ought to continue to be subsidized by the government	2
Other Problems Involving Wetlands Include:	
27. the over-emphasis of the purely economic values of wetlands	38
28. the problems associated with induced ecological imbalance	36
Solutions To Wetland Problems Should:	
29. recognize the limited time remaining to establish protection of wetlands, and immediately implement protection measures	47
30. use financial incentives to encourage preservation	141
31. establish the Ministry of Natural Resources as lead agency	82
32. establish an office of Wetlands Policy within the Ministry of Natural Resources	15
33. establish a joint lead agency of the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food	9

- define the involvement of the Conservation Authorities and similar groups in formulating and implementing wetland-protection programs 18
- strive for the preservation of all wetlands 24
- include acquisition by the government 51
- include creation and restoration of wetlands 17
- recognize that southern Ontario wetlands are the most fertile and threatened, so must receive special attention 17
- include northern Ontario wetlands in its scope 12

Wetland Policy Should:

- include a review of and possible amendments to the Drainage Act 1975 44
- insure that drainage proposals are subject to environmental assessment or cost-benefit analysis 122
- involve the federal government in limiting drainage grants 7
- offer incentives or tax rebates or create a new assessment class for wetlands 61
- not prescribe financial incentives which are a waste of money 5
- institute an immediate system of wetlands inventory 72
- establish an evaluation system for wetlands 56
- establish a list of provincially significant wetlands to have priority in preservation attempts 22
- initiate further research on wetlands 22
- recognize local interests and consult with local bodies on decisions affecting them 14
- uphold native rights 5
- encourage public participation in preservation 24
- develop programs to educate the public about Ontario's wetlands 87

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TOWARDS A WETLAND POLICY FOR ONTARIO

A Summary of Responses
To the Wetland
Discussion Paper

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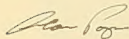
Ministry of
Natural
Resources

Hon. Alan W. Pope
Minister
W. T. Foster
Deputy Minister

Our Discussion Paper, "Towards A Wetland Policy For Ontario" generated more than 520 letters of response. I am very pleased that so many people expressed their concerns to me, and I am happy to have a great many ideas available for consideration during the process of policy development. As you can see from this summary, these ideas are varied and thought-provoking. We will discuss the ideas you have contributed, and I am confident that our deliberations will result in a suitable and effective policy.

I thank all of you who wrote to me about wetlands, and hope that you will continue to support the careful management of this important natural resource.

Sincerely,



Alan W. Pope

In September 1981, the Minister of Natural Resources released a Discussion Paper, "Towards A Wetland Policy For Ontario." This paper was developed after much consideration by an interministerial committee made up of representatives of provincial ministries.

The paper's purpose was to solicit as many views as possible in preparation for the development of a wetland policy. It was released through the news media and made available at Ministry offices throughout Ontario.

More than 520 letters and briefs were received in response. Many people expressed individual opinions, and many others wrote on behalf of formal groups such as the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

The issue raised most often centers around the overall value of wetlands and the need for a comprehensive wetland policy. The role wetlands play in providing benefits like recreation, water conservation and resources such as timber make them valuable to many people. Almost every letter stresses that wetlands are important and should receive careful consideration in any land-use decision.

The second issue, nearly as popular as the first, centers around farmland drainage and the Drainage Act. Many believe that the Drainage Act has caused extensive wetland loss. These writers assert that the Act benefits a few members of society at the expense of the majority. Of all the problems and issues raised by the Discussion Paper, opinions on this subject were strongest.

Many writers suggest that a system of comprehensive wetland evaluation and classification be initiated immediately, in order that decisions about wetlands have an objective, scientific basis.

Many also contribute suggestions for a wetland policy. Among these ideas are that wetlands be made tax-exempt, that government buy all important wetlands, and that grants be made to landowners who protect their wetlands.

INTERPRETATION

The Discussion Paper was not intended to be a scientific survey, which invites people to respond to set questions by choosing from among a group of set answers that can be grouped into rigidly defined categories. Instead, it allowed people to express many different ideas in a variety of ways. Although these ideas often share general themes, they also show significant differences.

For this reason, it is not easy to catalogue the responses objectively. However, grouping them under broad, general categories as we have done in the list that follows remains the best and least biased method of presenting the views expressed.

Those who would like a longer and more detailed report of the responses to the Discussion Paper may write to:

The Director
Wildlife Branch
Ministry of Natural Resources
Whitney Block, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1W3

A SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS

Respondents	Number Of Letters
1. Individuals	428
2. Nature and Conservation Organizations	41
3. Farming Organizations	9
4. Conservation Authorities	23
5. "Other" Organizations	19
	520

CONTENTS OF LETTERS

MAJOR IDEA	NUMBER OF LETTERS IN WHICH MENTIONED
Wetlands:	
1. must be protected and preserved	519
2. should be protected by policy	175
3. must be protected through clear, enforceable legislation	90
4. have been lost because of the view that wetlands are just wasteland	18
5. losses are insignificant	2
Wetland Benefits And Values Should Include:	
6. intangible values as well as tangible	70
7. ecological benefits	75
8. recreational benefits	41
9. economic benefits of undeveloped wetlands	45
10. social and aesthetic benefits	45
11. their value as wildlife and endangered species habitat	221
12. their importance in improving water quality and in flood control	175
13. the idea that benefits and values increase when wetlands are developed for other uses	12